

Area Survey
Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia

HABS No. VA-618 A
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VA
7 ALEX
109-

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Washington Office, Division of Design and Construction
Washington 25, D. C.

ADDENDUM TO
Mordecai Miller House
109 S. Fairfax Street
Alexandria
Virginia

HABS No. VA-618
(addendum)

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. VA-618
(addendum)

MORDECAI MILLER HOUSE

Location: 109 S. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia

Present Owner: Demolished after 1969 by the Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority as part of an urban renewal project in the old commercial center of Alexandria.

Statement of Significance: This three-storied nineteenth century residential building exhibits fine workmanship in the brickwork and restrained detailing.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1828

In a detailed account of the fire of January 18, 1827, appearing in the Phenix Gazette (Alexandria) of January 23, 1827, among the houses "burnt" on the west side of Fairfax Street between King and Prince Streets was:

A frame warehouse owned by Messrs. John Lloyd and Mordecai Miller, and occupied by Mrs. George Hill, tinner and coppersmith . . .

The following October the joint owners executed a deed of partition, allotting the northern three-fourths of the lot, "said to front on Fairfax Street 34 feet one and one-eighth inches" to Miller, and the remaining one-fourth to the south to John Lloyd--"to be separated by a line to be drawn from Fairfax Street to the Back line parallel to the north and south boundaries of said lot so as to leave one-fourth part . . . to the south and three-fourths part to the north of said dividing line." (In 1968, 109 S. Fairfax fronted 37 feet on Fairfax Street, and the adjoining lot on the south, had 20 feet fronting on Fairfax Street.)

In a deed of partition of Mordecai Miller's estate executed on August 12, 1833, the boundaries of the lot known as 109 S. Fairfax Street today are described as above, except that the depth of the lot is specified--60 feet, as it was in 1968. The property is further described as the lot "on which the said Mordecai Miller erected a three-story brick house, now occupied by George Hill." Presumably Miller built this house soon

after he and John Lloyd divided the lot, possibly in 1828.

2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: Mordecai Miller was the first owner; subsequent owners unknown.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

An exhibition of portraits of early Alexandrians was held in Gadsby's Tavern in the spring of 1956. It included an oil portrait of Mordecai Miller by John Gadsby Chapman. His biography, in brief, appears on pages 54-55 of the exhibition catalogue:

MORDECAI MILLER (1764-1832)

Born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, where his ancestors settled in 1702, Mordecai Miller moved to Alexandria and was a silversmith sometime before 1791, when he repaired a knee buckle and mended a table cross for George Washington. He imported clock works which were enclosed in mahogany cases with his name on the face. On November 8, 1792, he married Rebecca Hartshorne (1770-1810), born in Philadelphia, the daughter of William Hartshorne, who moved to Alexandria in 1774. Mordecai and his wife were both Quakers. He became a partner in the firm of his father-in-law, who was in the merchantile and shipping business, until 1799, when he became associated briefly with Abram Hewes & Co., auctioneers. He then built up a successful shipping business and spent the remainder of his life as an importer and dealer. Miller traded with the West Indies and South America, and shipped tobacco to Bremen. In 1817, he became agent for the Mount Hebron Cotton Manufacturing Company, and in 1818, his son, William Hartshorne Miller, became his partner . . .

This is only one of the Mordecai Miller houses in Alexandria. At least one other house built by him survives at what is today 501 Cameron Street.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Alexandria Deed Books Q-2, page 319; and U-2, page 540.
2. Secondary and published sources: Our Town, 1749-1865, Likenesses of This Place & Its People Taken from Life,

by Artists Known and Unknown (Richmond: Dietz Printing Company, 1956).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

Architectural character: This handsome three-story brick building exhibiting the characteristic Federal style of architecture found in the Alexandria waterfront area, possesses fine brickwork and remarkably few alterations in its exterior.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The historical records reveal the building of three stories and three bays measured 37 feet along the front on Fairfax Street and 60 feet in depth.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick, Flemish bond.
3. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: Stone step at entrance.
4. Chimneys: Two interior end chimneys.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways: The entrance is situated to the right of the three-bayed structure and has a classical surround with modillion cornice.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Each of the windows is marked by simple lintels which extend beyond its width. Beneath the lintels on either side of the windows are decorative bull's-eye blocks. The windows at the first two stories are twelve-over-twelve; at the third story, nine-over-nine.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Three rows of corbelled bricks form the cornice barely visible under the roof's overhang.

C. Site:

General setting and orientation: The building faces east along Fairfax Street.

Prepared by Mrs. Hugh B. Cox of
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Edited by
Antoinette J. Lee
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken in 1968 to document the commercial and residential buildings of downtown Alexandria which were to be demolished in an urban renewal project. The project was cosponsored by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and the Historic American Buildings Survey. Mrs. Hugh B. Cox was the historian and George Eisenman supplied the photographs. The material was edited and updated in 1975 by Antoinette J. Lee, working on contract with HABS.